



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.1725 | FAX (517) 373.0741
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/mcmanus/

For Immediate Release
September 15, 2005

Contact: Veronica LaDuke
517-373-1725

DNR budget compromise preserves funding for forest fire protection

LANSING – The conference committee charged with finding common ground between Senate and House proposals for balancing the 2005-2006 Department of Natural Resources budget has reached an agreement that preserves funding for forest fire protection, announced Sen. Michelle McManus, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Natural Resources.

“This has undoubtedly been the toughest budget cycle in many years,” said McManus, R-Lake Leelanau. “We were forced to make very difficult decisions in all areas of state government, and the DNR budget was no exception.”

The compromise includes a \$350,000 reduction in funds available for Payments in Lieu of Taxes. That reduction, from a total allotment of \$7.8 million in PILT funds, would be spread throughout the state to minimize the impact on the townships and counties affected. The reduction in PILT payments allowed the Legislature to keep \$350,000 for forest fire protection in the DNR budget.

“The State of Michigan needs the flexibility to fight fires whenever and wherever they occur,” McManus said. “We have an obligation to ensure programs like forest fire protection are funded so our residents know they can depend on them in a time of need.”

The conference committee’s proposal now goes to the full Legislature for consideration.

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